

Serving Country and Community: A Study of Service in AmeriCorps

A Profile of AmeriCorps Members at Baseline

CORPORATION

FOR NATIONAL

AND

COMMUNITY



SERVICE

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Created in 1993, the ***Corporation for National and Community Service*** engages more than 1.5 million Americans annually in improving communities through service. The Corporation supports service at national, state, and local levels through:

- AmeriCorps, whose members serve with local and national organizations to meet community needs while earning education awards to help finance college or training;
- Learn and Serve America, which helps link community service and learning objectives for youth from kindergarten through college as well as youth in community-based organizations; and
- The National Senior Service Corps (Senior Corps), the network of programs that helps Americans age 55 and older use their skills and experience in service opportunities that address the needs of their communities. Senior Corps includes the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Foster Grandparent Program, and Senior Companion Program.

Upon request, this material will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities.

Acknowledgements

This report is the first of a series of reports to be produced by Abt Associates for the Corporation for National and Community Service as part of “Serving Country and Community: A Study of Service in AmeriCorps.” The report describes characteristics and attitudes of AmeriCorps members at the time of their enrollment in the program.

The report represents substantial contributions from many individuals as we began the initial stages of the study. Most importantly, the authors of this report—JoAnn Jastrzab, Lawrence Bernstein, Lisa Litin, Sytske Braat-Campbell, Eric Stickney, Ellyn Artis, and Leanne Giordono—gratefully acknowledge the participation of the thousands of AmeriCorps members and their counterparts in the study’s comparison groups for their willingness to participate in the study and for being part of a longitudinal data collection effort that will provide critical information for the study. We also greatly appreciate the cooperation of the AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC Program Directors who assisted in data collection and provided valuable insight into their programs. We thank all of them for their contributions of time, information and support.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) is a federal agency established by the National and Community Trust Act of 1993 to engage citizens of all ages and backgrounds in community-based service. The Corporation's largest program, AmeriCorps, provides opportunities for participants to serve their communities and address local needs.

Examples of AmeriCorps Service Activities:

- Tutoring disadvantaged students
- Organizing neighborhood crime watches
- Converting vacant lots into neighborhood parks
- Leading community health awareness campaigns
- Operating food banks

AmeriCorps programs are required to address three priorities:

Getting Things Done—helping to solve unmet educational, environmental, safety or other human needs;

Strengthening Communities—mobilizing community resources, including volunteers, and building strong community partnerships; and

Participant Development—providing opportunities for members to develop an ethic of service and civic responsibility, increase their educational opportunities, and engage in service with people of diverse backgrounds.¹

AmeriCorps participants, referred to as members, commit to a year of full-time or sustained part-time community service in return for a modest living allowance and eligibility for a \$4,725 post-program education award that can be applied to post-secondary tuition or to the payment of college loans. In the 1999-2000 program year, which is the focus of this report, over 40,000 members enrolled in AmeriCorps. Members serve their communities through intensive results-oriented projects that address local educational, environmental, public safety, or other human needs.

To assess the extent to which AmeriCorps is achieving the goal of developing its members, the Corporation selected Abt Associates Inc. to design and conduct “Serving Country and Community: A Study of Service in AmeriCorps” to determine the effects of participation in AmeriCorps on members. This report is based on the initial phase of that study—baseline data collection from a nationally representative sample of members upon entry into AmeriCorps and corresponding individuals in comparison groups. The baseline data will be used to chart changes in outcomes over time. The report provides detailed information on

¹ Corporation for National and Community Service, *2000 Administrative and Program Guidance*.

member characteristics including their propensity to serve, demographics, attitudes related to civic engagement, life skills, and employment and educational attainment.

Study Design

The study includes a representative group of 2,233 members from the AmeriCorps*State and National program and the AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). In the State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC programs, members focus on direct service activities in the areas of education, public safety, conservation, and other human needs.² The study includes State and National members who enrolled in a nationally representative sample of 109 programs; the AmeriCorps*NCCC member sample comprises all members enrolled in three (of five) AmeriCorps*NCCC regional campuses.³ The sample includes individuals who enrolled in the programs between September 1999 and January 2000. Only first-year members—those who did not have prior AmeriCorps experience—were selected for inclusion in the study.

The primary focus of this study is an assessment of long-term impacts on participants in AmeriCorps. In order to assess the effects of participation in AmeriCorps on members, the study identified comparable individuals from comparison groups who were selected to match the two AmeriCorps divisions.⁴ The study collects longitudinal data on individuals in both treatment and comparison groups at three time points. Baseline data were collected in fall/winter 1999/2000, at the time members enrolled. Post-program data will be collected approximately one year after baseline; follow-up data will be collected three years after baseline. The study also collects information from AmeriCorps program directors about the basic characteristics of the AmeriCorps programs in which the members in this study are enrolled.

² The third division of AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), was not included in this study. AmeriCorps*VISTA members focus primarily on building capacity in local communities, in contrast to direct service provision. Since VISTA members' program experience and member profiles differ appreciably from the other programs, the effects of service participation may be different as well.

³ Members from the Capital Region campus in Washington, DC, the Central Region campus in Denver, CO, and the Western Region campus in San Diego, CA are included in the study.

⁴ This study is based on a quasi-experimental design, which uses a comparison group of individuals similar to the treatment group. The central challenge of a comparison group design stems from the fact that the two groups may not be absolutely equivalent at the point that the treatment group enrolled in AmeriCorps.

Key Findings

This report provides a snapshot of the characteristics of a representative group of members at the time of their enrollment in AmeriCorps. The key findings on members upon entry into AmeriCorps include the following:

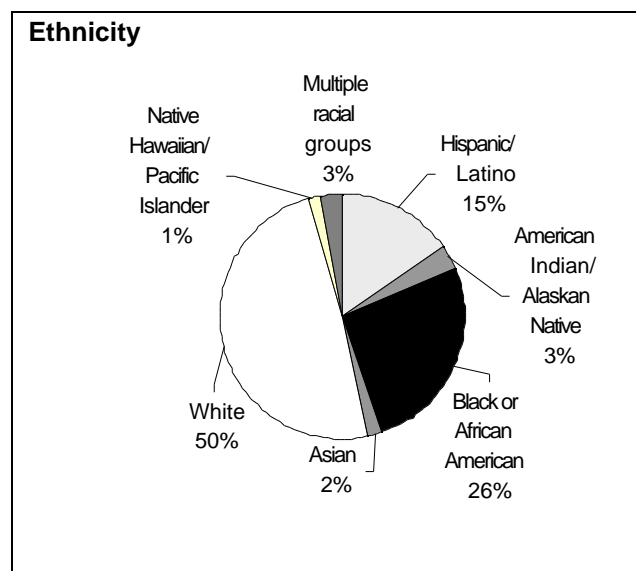
Demographic Characteristics

- Compared with the U.S. population as a whole, on average AmeriCorps members are younger and more likely to be female, single, and persons of color.
- Members are better educated than the national population.

Educational Achievement	AmeriCorps Members	U.S. Population
Less than high school	7%	18%
High school diploma/GED	25%	33%
Some college, no bachelor's degree	37%	26%
Bachelor's degree	29%	15%
Master's degree or higher	2%	7%

Source for national figures: Education Attainment, Persons 18 Years Old and Over, 1998 Census.

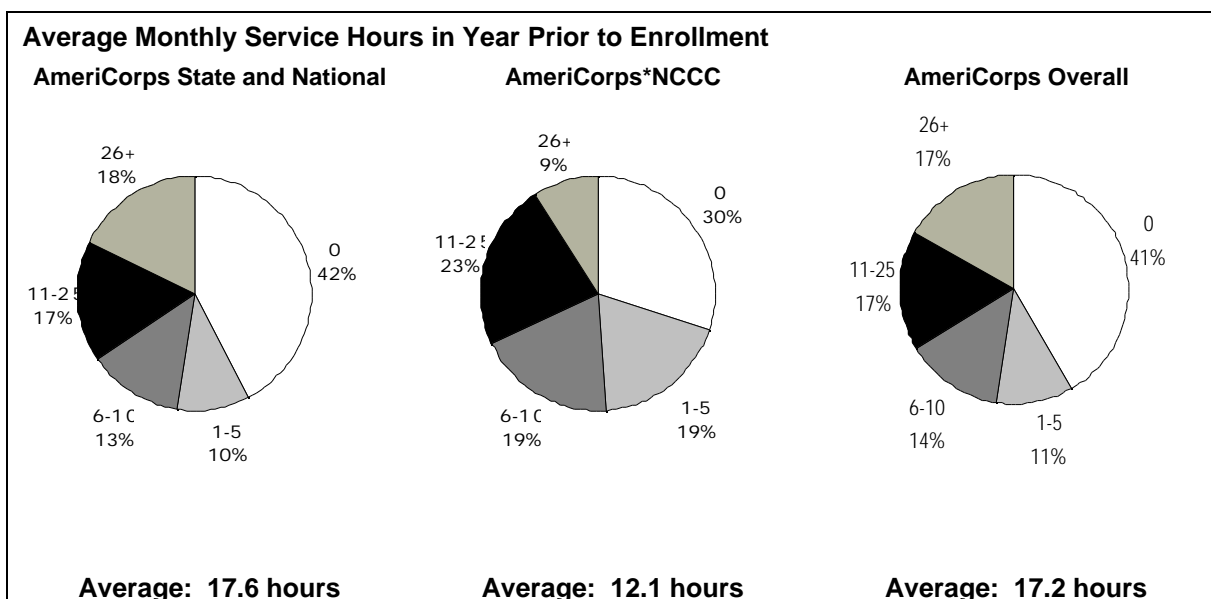
- Overall, AmeriCorps members are diverse in terms of ethnicity and race. Half the members are white. Blacks or African Americans represent a quarter of the members (26 percent), and Latinos or Hispanics another 15 percent.



- While overall members are ethnically diverse, there are important differences in member ethnicity between the two programs. State and National members are considerably more ethnically diverse than AmeriCorps*NCCC members—slightly less than half (46 percent) of State and National members are white, compared with 86 percent of the individuals enrolled in AmeriCorps*NCCC.
- Although they are better educated than the national average, prior to joining AmeriCorps 70 percent of members had personal incomes below \$15,000. Overall, household income for members averaged \$35,000, about 80 percent of the national average.

Civic Engagement

- AmeriCorps members express a strong commitment to service. Most members said their primary reason for joining AmeriCorps was to help other people or perform community service. Prior to joining the program, members had high levels of participation in service activities. More than half of the members (58 percent) reported that they had participated in service the year before joining AmeriCorps, a figure nine percentage points higher than the national average of 49 percent.
- During the 1998 election (the most recent election prior to baseline data collection), AmeriCorps members were much more likely to have voted compared with the nation as a whole. More than half of AmeriCorps members reported they voted (54 percent), compared to one in three eligible individuals nationwide.
- In the year prior to enrollment in AmeriCorps, members contributed more hours of service per month compared with national figures. AmeriCorps members averaged 17.2 hours of service per month, almost double the national average of 8.8.



Attitudes Related to Employment

- Almost two-thirds of the members said it was “very important” for them to work in a job where they would be of direct service to people (65 percent) or work to correct social and economic inequities (63 percent), compared with one-quarter who said it was “very important” to work in a job where they could make as much money as possible.
- Although no field of future work of study was preferred by a majority of members, teaching (28 percent), social/community work (26 percent) and health-related (15 percent) are the most common fields members said they hope to be engaged in two years after their enrollment in AmeriCorps.

Conclusions and Future Analyses

In the baseline report, we present findings from the analysis of baseline data from “Serving Country and Community: A Study of Service in AmeriCorps.” Baseline data are reported in this document to provide a profile of members at their enrollment into AmeriCorps.

Although, in general, the treatment and comparison groups are similar, there are a number of important differences between the State and National groups in terms of both demographics and baseline outcome characteristics. In contrast, AmeriCorps*NCCC treatment and comparison groups are highly comparable.

In subsequent reports baseline data will be used in conjunction with corresponding data from post-program and subsequent data collections to measure changes in outcomes for members. The next phase of the study—the post-program analysis—will examine changes in AmeriCorps members (compared with their counterparts in the comparison groups) one year after baseline, when most members will have completed their program experience. In addition to reporting on member outcomes, the post-program report will include an analysis of selected programmatic features and their relationship to changes in member outcomes.

The final, or follow-up, phase of the study will be based on data collected on members and individuals in the comparison groups approximately three years after baseline.

1. Introduction

Overview of AmeriCorps

The Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) is a federal agency established by the National and Community Trust Act of 1993 to engage citizens of all ages and backgrounds in community-based service. The Corporation's mandate builds on a tradition of national service that includes programs such as Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps and John F. Kennedy's Peace Corps. The Corporation supports service-learning programs in schools through its Learn and Serve America program as well as service opportunities for older citizens through its three Senior Corps programs. The Corporation's largest program, AmeriCorps, is the national service network that provides opportunities for participants to serve their communities and address local needs.

Examples of AmeriCorps Service Activities:

- Tutoring disadvantaged students
- Organizing neighborhood crime watches
- Converting vacant lots into neighborhood parks
- Leading community health awareness campaigns
- Operating food banks

AmeriCorps participants, referred to as members, commit to a year of full-time or sustained part-time community service in return for a modest living allowance and eligibility for a \$4,725 post-program education award that can be applied to post-secondary tuition or to the payment of college loans. In the 1999-2000 program year, which is the focus of this report, over 40,000 members enrolled in AmeriCorps through a nationwide network of more than 700 community-based programs. The Corporation funds AmeriCorps programs through State Commissions and national nonprofit service organizations. Members serve their communities through intensive results-oriented projects that address local educational, environmental, public safety, or other human needs. During the 1999-2000 program year, the Corporation identified services to children and youth as a national priority for its grantees.

AmeriCorps has three divisions, all of which are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service:

- **State and National** programs represent the largest AmeriCorps division and comprise local, state, and national community organizations that have formed partnerships with the Corporation in order to engage members in community service. Members, aged 17 or older, commit to serving either full-time or part-time in order to support the organizations' efforts to provide services to communities in need.
- **AmeriCorps*NCCC** (National Civilian Community Corps) is a 10-month residential service program for young adults between the ages of 18 and 24. Members serve full-time in teams on projects that are developed by five regional

AmeriCorps*NCCC campuses in conjunction with local and national community organizations or government agencies.

- **AmeriCorps*VISTA** (Volunteers in Service to America) is the nation’s longest-operating domestic national service program, established in 1965. AmeriCorps*VISTA members create sustainable programs in the communities that they serve. Members, aged 17 or older, live in the community and provide services to reinforce the capacity of local organizations to address the needs of disadvantaged communities.

AmeriCorps programs are required to address three priorities:

Getting Things Done—helping to solve unmet educational, environmental, safety or other human needs;

Strengthening Communities—mobilizing community resources, including volunteers, and building strong community partnerships; and

Participant Development—providing opportunities for members to develop an ethic of service and civic responsibility, increase their educational opportunities, and engage in service with people of diverse backgrounds.⁵

The Corporation’s mission statement speaks directly to the third priority, promoting the development of those engaged in service:

In doing so [providing opportunities to engage in service], the Corporation will foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service.

To assess the extent to which AmeriCorps is achieving the goal of developing its members, in 1998 the Corporation selected Abt Associates Inc. to design and conduct “Serving Country and Community: A Study of Service in AmeriCorps.” This study will track AmeriCorps members across three timepoints: enrollment in AmeriCorps; one year later, roughly corresponding to the completion of the service year; and two years after that, to assess the longer-term effects of participation.

This report is based on the initial phase of the study—baseline data collection from a nationally representative sample of members upon entry into AmeriCorps and corresponding individuals in the comparison groups. The primary purpose of the data collection was to collect baseline data that will be used to chart changes in outcomes over time. These outcomes include characteristics such as civic engagement, education and employment

⁵ Corporation for National and Community Service, *2000 Administrative and Program Guidance*.

goals, and life skills and attitudes. In subsequent reports baseline data will be used in conjunction with corresponding data from the post-program and follow-up data collections to measure changes in outcomes for members.

Key Findings

This report provides a snapshot of the characteristics of a representative group of members at the time of their enrollment in AmeriCorps. The key findings are as follows:

- Compared with the U.S. population as a whole, on average AmeriCorps members are younger and more likely to be female, single, and persons of color. Members are better educated than the national population yet had lower personal household incomes in the year prior to enrolling in AmeriCorps.
- Members express a strong commitment to service:
 - Most members said their primary reason for joining AmeriCorps was to help other people or perform community service.
 - Prior to joining the program, members had high levels of participation in service activities, experiences they generally positively rated.
- Members scored high on measures of civic engagement, acceptance of diversity, and life skills.

Organization of this Report

The remainder of this report is organized in three sections. In the next section, we begin with an overview of the study design. Next in Section 3, we describe member background characteristics and then report on the members' baseline status on the outcomes that we will track over time, beginning with civic engagement. These outcomes include a description of members' prior participation in service along with their attitudes about civic responsibility and community knowledge. We then describe members' perceptions and competencies in a set of life skills, and discuss members' attitudes toward education and employment. In general, we report on AmeriCorps members overall, combining State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC members.⁶ However, as appropriate, we note important differences between key subgroups of members, such as State and National vs. AmeriCorps*NCCC, and subgroups defined by gender, ethnicity, etc.

⁶ Data in this report reflect the weighted samples. (See next section for information on sample weighting.) Since members in the State and National program represent almost 93 percent of the weighted combined State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC overall sample, the responses in this report generally correspond to those of the State and National sample. Additional information about State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC members is included in Appendix Exhibits H1 and H2.

In the last section of this report, we discuss the similarities and differences between members and individuals in the comparison groups in terms of demographics and key outcome measures. This set of comparisons of the two groups will help us identify the baseline variables that need to be controlled for in subsequent impact analyses. We conclude this section with a review of the next set of activities to be undertaken on the study.

The Appendix to this report is organized in the following nine parts:

- A. Theory of Change Model
- B. State and National Programs Participating in the AmeriCorps Study
- C. Issues Related to Quasi-Experimental Design
- D. Sampling and Weighting Procedures
- E. Prior Service Experience of AmeriCorps Members and Comparisons by Subgroup
- F. Constructs Used in Baseline Comparability Analysis
 - F.1 List of Composite Measures
 - F.2 Results of Reliability Analyses of the Composite Measures
- G. Statistical and Practical Significance
- H. Comparison of Treatment and Comparison Groups
- I. Sources for Survey Items

2. Overview of the Study Design

“Serving Country and Community: A Study of Service in AmeriCorps” is designed to address three objectives, as specified by the Corporation:

- Describe how life outcomes of members change over time;
- Identify programmatic and member characteristics that may explain differences in outcomes; and
- Determine whether changes in AmeriCorps members’ outcomes can be linked to participation in service.

The study includes a representative group of members from the AmeriCorps*State and National program and AmeriCorps*NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) in the 1999-2000 program year. In the State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC programs, members focus on direct service activities in the areas of education, public safety, conservation, and other human needs.⁷

AmeriCorps*State members enroll through a network of local community-based organizations, educational institutions, and other agencies receiving Corporation funding through their gubernatorially appointed State Commissions. AmeriCorps* National programs are funded through national nonprofit service organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity and Communities in Schools, that operate programs in multiple states. Approximately two-thirds of the funds are distributed through State Commissions; the rest are allocated through National direct organizations. In program year 1999-2000, AmeriCorps*State and National programs enrolled approximately 36,000 members.

AmeriCorps*NCCC is a ten-month, residential program administered by the Corporation for young people between the ages of 18 and 24. In program year 1999-2000, AmeriCorps*NCCC enrolled approximately 1,000 members based at five regional campuses. AmeriCorps*NCCC corpsmembers engage in service activities similar to their counterparts in AmeriCorps*State and National. In addition, they participate in disaster relief projects in conjunction with the Red Cross, and spend approximately half of their time off-site on *spikes* where they live in the communities they serve, providing services throughout the region.

⁷ The third division of AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), was not included in this study. AmeriCorps*VISTA members focus primarily on building capacity in local communities, in contrast to direct service provision. Since the program experience and member profiles differ appreciably from the other programs, the effects of service participation may be different from that of State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC members. In collaboration with the Corporation, it was determined that the study would focus exclusively on State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC programs at this time. Throughout this report we combine the two divisions as “AmeriCorps” when we discuss overall member profiles and baseline results.

To identify the types of outcomes that may be associated with participation in AmeriCorps, as part of the design stage for this study evaluation staff visited a representative set of AmeriCorps programs. On these visits, we observed service activities and talked with administrators, members, and alumni. Our goals were (1) to develop an understanding of how participation could affect members, and (2) to identify the categories of outcomes that may be linked with participation.

We then used a “theory of change” approach to construct a model for each program. Each model identified all of the activities of the program, the immediate member outcomes that might be expected from participation in the activities, and the short-term and long-term outcomes expected to occur if the immediate outcomes were produced. Each model was reviewed by the corresponding program staff for accuracy and comprehensiveness. The program-specific models were used to develop a more general model of change that could be adapted across the range of AmeriCorps programs.⁸ The potential set of outcomes that were identified through this process are listed in Exhibit 1. These outcomes were measured at baseline (and are reported on in this report) and will be measured again by the study at two timepoints—one and three years later.

The study includes State and National members who enrolled in a nationally representative sample of 109 programs; the AmeriCorps*NCCC member sample comprises all members enrolled in three (of five) AmeriCorps*NCCC regional campuses.⁹ The sample includes individuals who enrolled in the programs between September 1999 and January 2000, a time frame corresponding to the primary annual intake cycle for AmeriCorps. Only first-year members—those who did not have prior AmeriCorps experience—were selected for inclusion in the study. Part-time members also were excluded from the study to ensure a consistent intensity of service experience across sample members.

Baseline Sample Sizes

	State and National	NCCC	Total
Treatment	1,755	478	2,233 ^a
Comparison	1,529	410	1,939
Total	3,284	888	4,172

^a The 1,755 State and National members represent a weighted sample of 11,393 members who enrolled in the program between September 1999 and January 2000. (Procedures used to select and weight the State and National sample are provided in Appendix D.) Second-year and part-time members are excluded from the study sample, as well as members enrolled in Teach for America and programs with fewer than 5 members. The 478 AmeriCorps*NCCC members represent all 799 first-year members enrolled in the program during the 1999-2000 program year.

The primary focus of this study is an assessment of long-term impacts on participants in AmeriCorps. Impact evaluations measure the degree to which a particular program, service, or intervention affects its intended target group. In order to assess the effects of participation in AmeriCorps on members, the study identified comparable individuals from comparison

⁸ The theory of change model can be found in Appendix A.

⁹ Members from the Capital Region campus in Washington, DC, the Central Region campus in Denver, CO, and the Western Region campus in San Diego, CA are included in the study. The State and National programs in the study are listed in Appendix B.

Exhibit 1**Potential Outcomes Assessed at Baseline**

I. Civic Engagement

Civic Attitudes – Identification
Civic Attitudes – Knowledge
Civic Attitudes – Responsibilities
Voting in the 1998 national election (%)
Registered to vote in the 1998 national election (%)
Prior Service – Perception
Prior Service – Participation
Involvement – Attitudes: number of activities
Involvement – Prior participation
Prior participation in voluntary community service
 Ever (%)
 Past 5 years (%)
 Past 12 months (%)
Mean hours of participation (past 12 months)

II. Employment

Basic Work Skills – Amount of experience
Basic Work Skills – Importance to you

III. Life Skills

Diversity – Attitudes (1)
Diversity – Attitudes (2)
Diversity – Knowledge
Ability to work in teams
Efficacy – Civic
Efficacy – Educational
Efficacy – Employment

groups.¹⁰ Separate national comparison groups were selected to match the two AmeriCorps divisions. For both groups we sought to identify comparison groups of individuals who demonstrated both a knowledge of AmeriCorps and some indication of a propensity toward service. The State and National comparison group comprises individuals who had indicated knowledge of, and interest in, AmeriCorps by contacting the Corporation's toll-free information line and requesting information about the program, but who did not enroll. For reasons of comparability, the comparison group is limited to those contacting the information line during roughly the same period as when the individuals in the program group applied and were accepted into AmeriCorps—summer to fall 1999. For AmeriCorps*NCCC, the comparison group was selected from the pool of individuals who applied for entry into AmeriCorps*NCCC during the spring 1999 recruitment and selection process¹¹ but either did not enroll because of a limited number of slots in the program or were invited to enroll, but declined.

The study collects longitudinal data on individuals in both treatment and comparison groups at three time points. Baseline data were collected in fall/winter 1999/2000, at the time members enrolled. Post-program data will be collected approximately one year after baseline; follow-up data will be collected three years after baseline. The study also collects information from AmeriCorps program directors about the basic characteristics of the AmeriCorps programs in which the members in this study are enrolled.

¹⁰ This study is based on a quasi-experimental design, which uses a comparison group of individuals similar to the treatment group. The central challenge of a comparison group design stems from the fact that the two groups may not be absolutely equivalent at the point that the treatment group enrolled in AmeriCorps. Thus, for example, if members later end up in higher or lower paying jobs than comparison members, some of the difference in outcomes may be due to pre-program differences in characteristics rather than to program participation. Moreover, while some of the pre-program differences between the two groups may be measurable (such as differences in age, ethnicity, educational level, attitudes and knowledge), which we can statistically control, some may not (such as the persistence and "follow-through" it takes to get accepted to the program). Additional discussion of issues related to quasi-experimental design is provided in Appendix C.

¹¹ Candidates are recruited and selected during the spring for subsequent enrollment in the AmeriCorps*NCCC during the fall and winter.

3. Background Characteristics of AmeriCorps Members at Baseline

In this section we provide a description of AmeriCorps members upon enrollment into the program. Data reported here are intended to serve as a foundation for subsequent analyses in which we will track changes in members' attitudes and behavior over time. The data also are useful in providing a profile of a representative group of AmeriCorps members. This description of member characteristics is organized in five parts:

- Propensity to Serve
- Demographic Characteristics
- Civic Engagement
- Life Skills
- Attitudes Related to Employment

Propensity to Serve

Participation in AmeriCorps requires a full-time commitment for one year,¹² and members receive only a modest living allowance, typically equivalent to minimum wage or lower, for their service. Given the more lucrative employment opportunities available to most individuals in the robust economy that characterized the time when they entered the program, it is worth asking why members decided to enroll in AmeriCorps. Indeed, as noted in Exhibit 2, the primary reason given for enrolling in AmeriCorps is *to help other people, or to perform a community service*. Well over half (58 percent) of the members cited this objective as an important reason for joining AmeriCorps. The second most common reason was to *explore future job and/or educational interests*, as reported by more than half (51 percent) of the respondents. The third most common response, *to get an education award*, was given by 42 percent of members.

Overall, AmeriCorps members demonstrate a commitment to service: over 80 percent had participated in service at some time prior to their enrollment in the program. Well over half had served during the previous year. Overall, members served an average of 17.2 hours per month. Of those who reported participation in service during the preceding year, members contributed an average of almost 30 (29.5) hours per month.

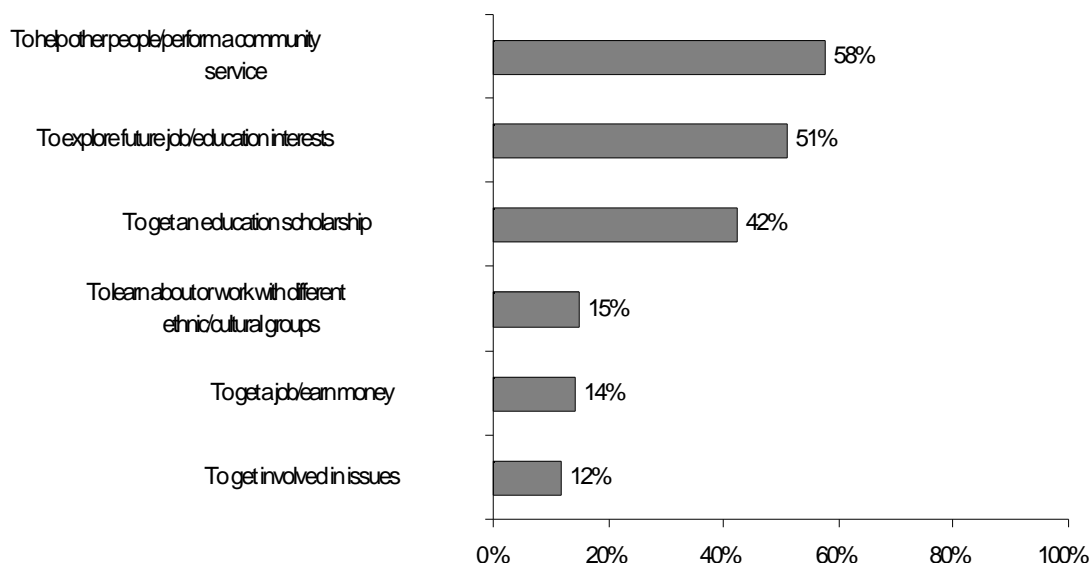
Service Experience Prior to AmeriCorps	
Ever participated	82%
Participated within past 5 years	78%
Participated in past year	58%

Ever participated	82%
Participated within past 5 years	78%
Participated in past year	58%

¹² Part-time service options are available for members serving less than 1,700 hours per year. Members may enroll in AmeriCorps for up to two years; however this study includes only full-time, first-year members.

Exhibit 2

Two Most Important Reasons for Joining AmeriCorps



Note: Multiple answers were allowed to this question.

Overall, one in five members relocated in order to join AmeriCorps. That overall figure is influenced by the residential AmeriCorps*NCCC program, which is housed in five regional campuses. However, even within the State and National program, almost 15 percent of members reported they had moved to participate in AmeriCorps, perhaps an indication of their commitment to serving in a specific AmeriCorps program or service focus.

Demographic Characteristics

In this section, we describe the basic demographic characteristics of AmeriCorps members. As a point of reference, comparable national figures are reported in Exhibit 3. Demographics also are reported separately for members in the State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC programs.

Gender. Overall, close to three-fourths of AmeriCorps members are women—71 percent. Participation rates by women are similar for both

Compared to figures for the US population as a whole, AmeriCorps members are:

- More likely to be women
- More diverse in terms of race and ethnicity
- Younger
- More likely to be single
- Living in households with below-average income
- Better educated

Exhibit 3**Comparison of Selected AmeriCorps Member Demographics with National Population Data**

	State and National	AmeriCorps* NCCC	State and National and AmeriCorps* NCCC Members Combined	National Population
Average Age	27.9	21.5	27.5	36.4 ^a
Gender				
Female	71.0%	67.6%	70.8%	51.1% ^a
Race/Ethnicity				
White	46.2%	85.6%	48.8%	71.9% ^b
African American	27.5%	4.7%	26.0%	12.1%
Latino/Hispanic	16.0%	3.9%	15.3%	11.5%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3.5%	0.2%	3.3%	0.7%
Asian American	2.2%	3.0%	2.2%	} 3.7%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1.4%	0.2%	1.3%	
Multiple racial group	3.2%	2.4%	3.1%	N/A
Marital Status				
Single, never married	71.9%	99.4%	73.7%	27.9% ^c
Married	15.0%	0.4%	14.1%	52.9%
Widowed, divorced, or separated	13.1%	0.2%	12.2%	19.4%
Average Household Income	\$32,683 ^d	\$61,475 ^d	\$34,924 ^d	\$51,855 ^e
Educational Attainment				
High school diploma	92.3%	99.4%	92.8%	82.1% ^f
College degree	29.8%	50.2%	31.2%	22.2% ^f

Notes for national population estimates:

a For July 2000. Source: Population Estimation Program. Population Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, July 1999.

b Source: Population Estimates Program, U.S. Census, July 1999.

c Figures quoted are for individuals 15 years of age or older. Source: U.S. Census, Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1998.

d Household income includes total annual income of all members of immediate family living in household.

e Figures quoted are for individuals 15 years of age or older. Source: Income Tables, U.S. Census, 1998.

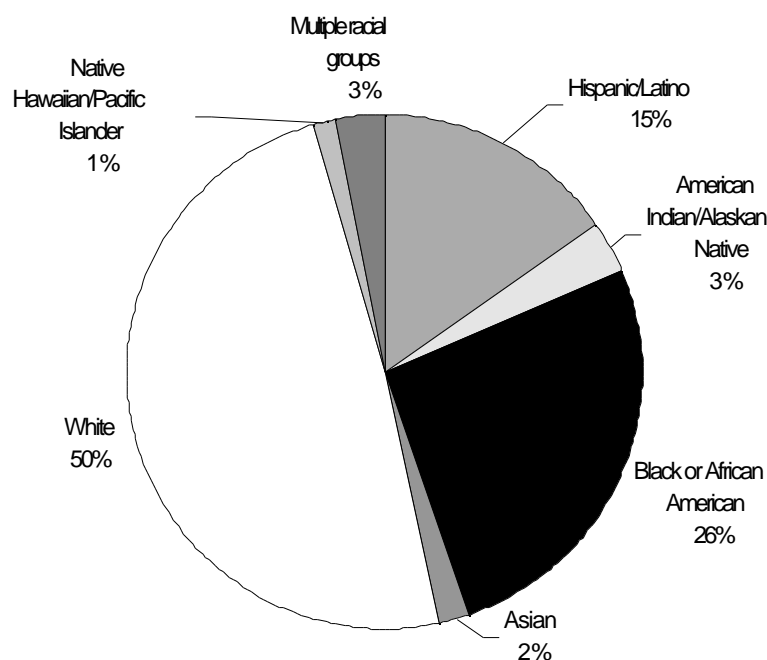
f Figures quoted are for individuals 18 years of age or older. Source: Population Estimate Program, U.S. Census, 1998.

State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC. High participation rates for women may reflect the focus of many AmeriCorps programs on the educational issue area, an occupational field traditionally attracting more women than men.¹³

Ethnicity. Overall, AmeriCorps members are diverse in terms of ethnicity and race. Half the members are white. Blacks or African Americans represent a quarter of the members (26 percent), and Latinos or Hispanics another 15 percent. Exhibit 4 illustrates the distribution of all members by ethnicity. While overall members are ethnically diverse, there are important differences in member ethnicity between the two programs. State and National members are considerably more ethnically diverse than AmeriCorps*NCCC members—slightly less than half (46 percent) of State and National members are white, compared with 86 percent of the individuals enrolled in AmeriCorps*NCCC.

Exhibit 4

Ethnicity of AmeriCorps Members



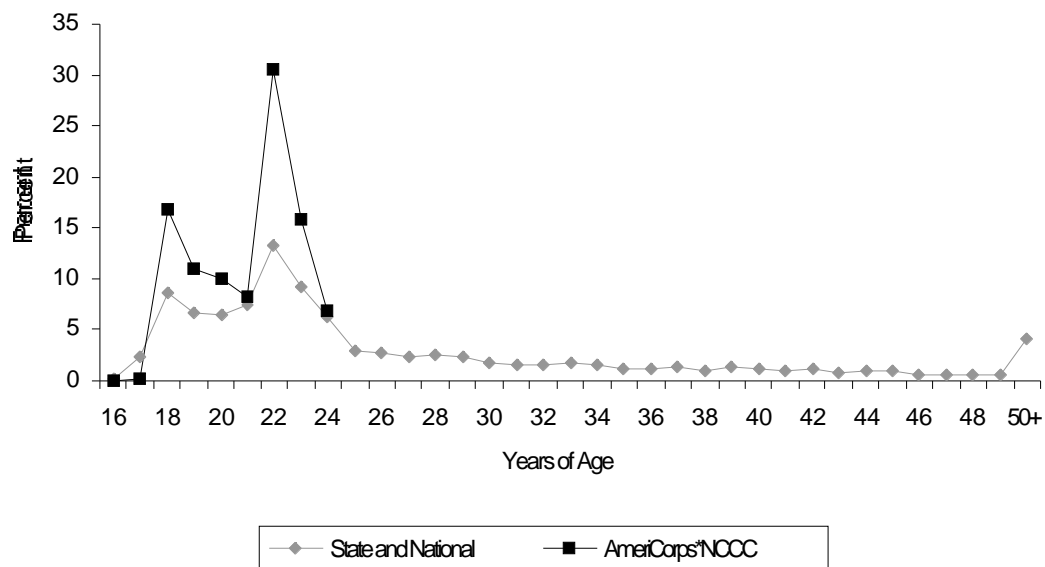
Note: Percentages are rounded.

¹³ Education is the most common service issue area for AmeriCorps. Over half of AmeriCorps State and National programs provide educational services. See *Descriptive Study of AmeriCorps Literacy Program*, Abt Associates Inc., 1999. Higher participation rates for women are consistent with those found by Independent Sector in its national study, *Giving and Volunteering in the United States, 1996*. The Independent Sector is a national forum that works to encourage philanthropy, volunteering, not-for-profit initiatives, and citizen action. National figures on volunteerism reported in this part of the report are based on findings from that study. It reported that “noncontributors” (individuals who did not volunteer or contribute to charitable organizations) were more likely to be male.

Age. Participation in AmeriCorps is open to U.S. citizens 17 years of age or older.¹⁴ The average age of members is 27.5 years, with members in the study ranging in age from 17 through 79. As indicated in Exhibit 5, overall, most members join before they enter their late twenties. Not surprisingly, enrollment often occurs at transition periods in young peoples' lives—age at enrollment spikes around 18 and then again around 22, time periods roughly corresponding to members' presumed graduation from high school and college. This pattern is especially true for AmeriCorps*NCCC. But even though most members are in their late teens and early twenties, over a quarter of State and National members (27 percent) are 30 years of age or older at enrollment.

Exhibit 5

Distribution of AmeriCorps Members by Age

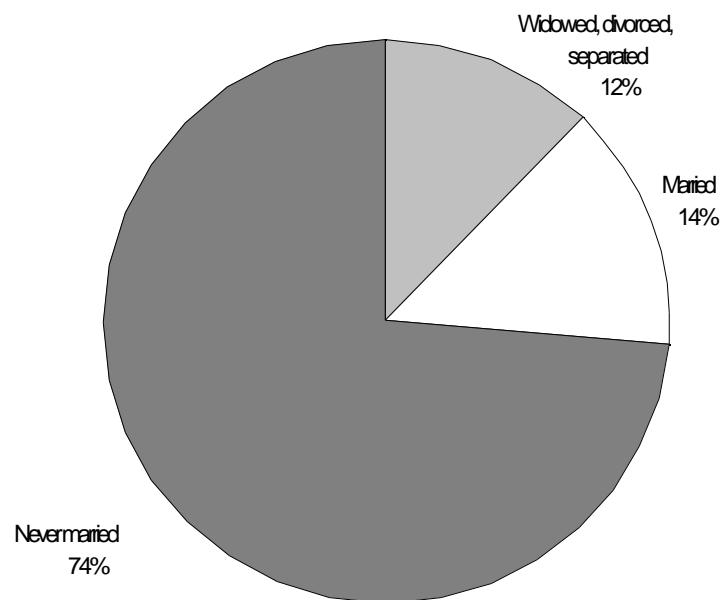


Marital Status and Parenting. Almost three-quarters of the members (74 percent) are single and had never been married prior to enrollment in AmeriCorps. As indicated in Exhibit 6, only 14 percent of AmeriCorps members were married at the time they enrolled; the remaining individuals (12 percent) were widowed, divorced, or separated. Even considering the comparatively young age of many members, this marital rate seems especially low. At the national level, over a quarter (26 percent) of individuals in the general population between the ages of 15 and 24 are married.¹⁵ Women in AmeriCorps are twice as likely to

¹⁴ AmeriCorps*NCCC is limited to young people between the ages of 18 and 24; there is no upper age limit for the State and National program.

¹⁵ Source: U.S. Census, Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1998.

be married than men at enrollment; 17 percent of women members are married, compared with only 8 percent of men. Not surprisingly, because of both the residential nature of the program and its age limits, less than 1 percent of AmeriCorps*NCCC members are married, compared with 15 percent for State and National members.

Exhibit 6**Marital Status of AmeriCorps Members Overall**

Over a third of all members are parents (36 percent); of those, 84 percent have children living with them. Almost all members who have children living with them are women (92 percent).

Income. During their period of service, AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance generally equivalent to minimum wage. The living allowance may not have been perceived as much of a reduction from members' prior income levels—79 percent already had personal incomes below \$15,000 in 1998 before they joined AmeriCorps (see Exhibit 7). Almost two-thirds (64 percent) reported personal incomes below \$10,000. On the other hand, household income for the same period was considerably higher, although still well below the national average. Overall household income for AmeriCorps members averaged \$34,924, about 80 percent of the national average. Average household income was considerably higher for AmeriCorps*NCCC members compared to those enrolled in State and National. Since they are younger, more AmeriCorps*NCCC members may have been dependent on their parents' income, resulting

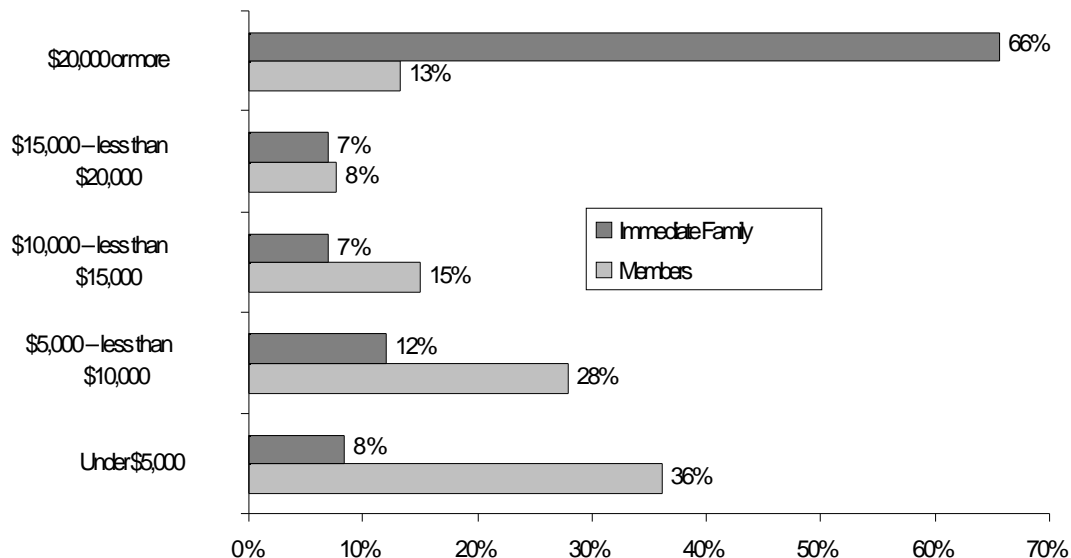
Average 1998 Household Income:

State and National	\$32,683
AmeriCorps*NCCC	\$61,475

in a higher combined household income. Overall, almost two-thirds (65 percent) of members reporting personal incomes below \$10,000 said they lived with their parents.

Exhibit 7

Annual Income of AmeriCorps Members in 1998, Before Taxes



Education. AmeriCorps members are more highly educated than the national population. Overall, fewer than a tenth (7 percent) lack a high school diploma, a figure less than half that for the general population. Overall, members roughly divide into three groups: slightly more than a third (37 percent) have at least some post-secondary education, including associate's degrees, but have not obtained a bachelor's degree; slightly smaller percentages (31 and 32 percent, respectively) have either received a degree from a four-year or graduate institution, or have only a high school diploma or less. In general, AmeriCorps*NCCC members are more highly educated than their counterparts in the State and National program. Half of AmeriCorps*NCCC members are college graduates, compared with less than a third (30 percent) of State and National members.

Educational Achievement	AmeriCorps Members	U.S. Population
Less than high school	7%	18%
High school diploma/GED	25%	33%
Some college, no bachelor's degree	37%	26%
Bachelor's degree	29%	15%
Master's degree or higher	2%	7%

Source for national figures: Education Attainment, Persons 18 Years Old and Over, 1998 Census.

Members have high educational aspirations: 62 percent say they would like to earn a bachelor's degree or higher—double the number who currently have a degree from a four-year college. As noted earlier, the education award was an important incentive for many members to enroll in AmeriCorps.

Living Arrangements. Prior to joining AmeriCorps, most members lived with parents, spouses, or other family members. Over 20 percent lived with one or more friends, while only 14 percent of the members lived alone.

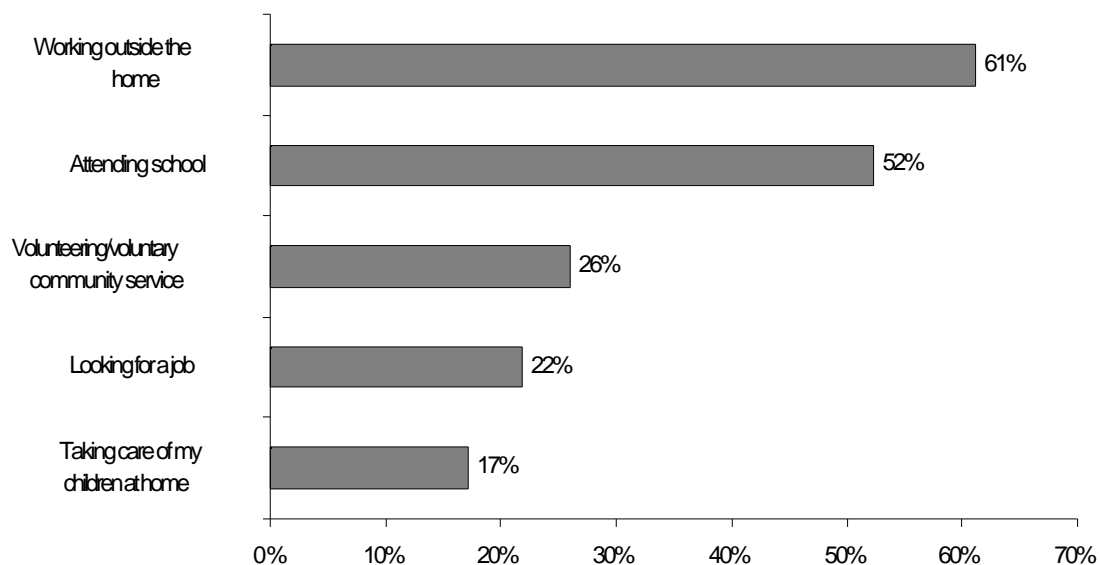
Living Arrangements Prior to AmeriCorps

Lived with parents	31%
Lived with spouse/partner and/or children	28%
Lived with other family members	5%
Lived with friend(s)	22%
Lived alone	14%
Other	2%

Activities Prior to Joining AmeriCorps. Most members were employed at some point during the year before entering AmeriCorps. As indicated in Exhibit 8, over a quarter of the respondents (26 percent) reported volunteering or doing community service as a key activity prior to joining AmeriCorps. For about a third of those individuals (8 percent overall), service was the only activity reported. Others who reported that they were engaged in service also participated in at least one other key activity such as work or school.

Exhibit 8

Activities in 12 Months Before Joining AmeriCorps



Note: Multiple answers were allowed to this question.

Civic Engagement

Promoting civic engagement is a primary goal for all of the Corporation's programs. AmeriCorps programs are encouraged to "use service to enable members to see themselves as problem-solvers, not problems; to become leaders, not just followers; and to take personal responsibility."¹⁶ Previous studies have indicated that prior engagement in service is correlated with subsequent service;¹⁷ therefore, at baseline, the study collected information about members' prior involvement in service and voting participation, as well as their attitudes and knowledge about their community.

As mentioned earlier, more than half of the members (58 percent) reported that they had participated in service in the year prior to enrollment. This figure is nine percentage points higher than the national average of 49 percent. Moreover, in the year prior to enrollment in AmeriCorps, members contributed more hours of service per month compared with national figures. AmeriCorps members averaged 17.2 hours of service per month, almost double the national average of 8.8.

For members who reported serving in the previous year, the average number of hours served was 30 per month, ranging from one to several hundred hours per month. Overall, a third of members (34 percent) reported that they contributed more than 10 hours of service a month. Of those reporting they served in the past year, African Americans, Native Americans/Pacific Islanders, and men served the most hours; individuals in those three groups contributed an average of over 40 hours per month. Seventy percent of the AmeriCorps*NCCC members served in the previous year, compared with 58 percent of those enrolled in the State and National program. However, 18 percent of State and National members served more than 25 hours—double the percentage for AmeriCorps*NCCC. The distribution of service hours for State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC is presented in Exhibit 10. (More detailed information about prior service participation by subgroups of members is provided in Appendix E.)

The Independent Sector study of volunteerism found that selected prior experiences during individuals' childhood or teenage years appear to affect future volunteerism. We asked members whether, when they were younger, they had experienced four key events the Independent Sector found to be related to subsequent higher rates of volunteerism in adults. Compared with the national averages, AmeriCorps members consistently reported higher rates of incidence of these experiences, as indicated in Exhibit 11.

¹⁶ AmeriCorps*State Application Guidelines. In *Corporation for National and Community Service: 2000 Administration and Program Guide*.

¹⁷ See *Giving and Volunteering in the United States: Findings from a National Study: 1996 edition*. Independent Sector, Washington, D.C., 1996.

Exhibit 9

Percent of AmeriCorps Members Reporting Participation in Service During the Previous Year, and Average Hours per Month in Service, by Race/Ethnicity (N = 1,358)

Race/Ethnicity	Overall Average Service Hours per Month	Percent Participating in Service in the Past Year	Average Service Hours per Month for Those Who Served in Past Year
White	13.7	61.0	22.5
Black or African American	22.9	54.9	41.8
Hispanic or Latino	18.3	55.7	32.8
Other ^a	16.5	57.6	28.7

a Includes American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and individuals reporting multiple races.

Average Monthly Service Hours in Year Prior to Enrollment

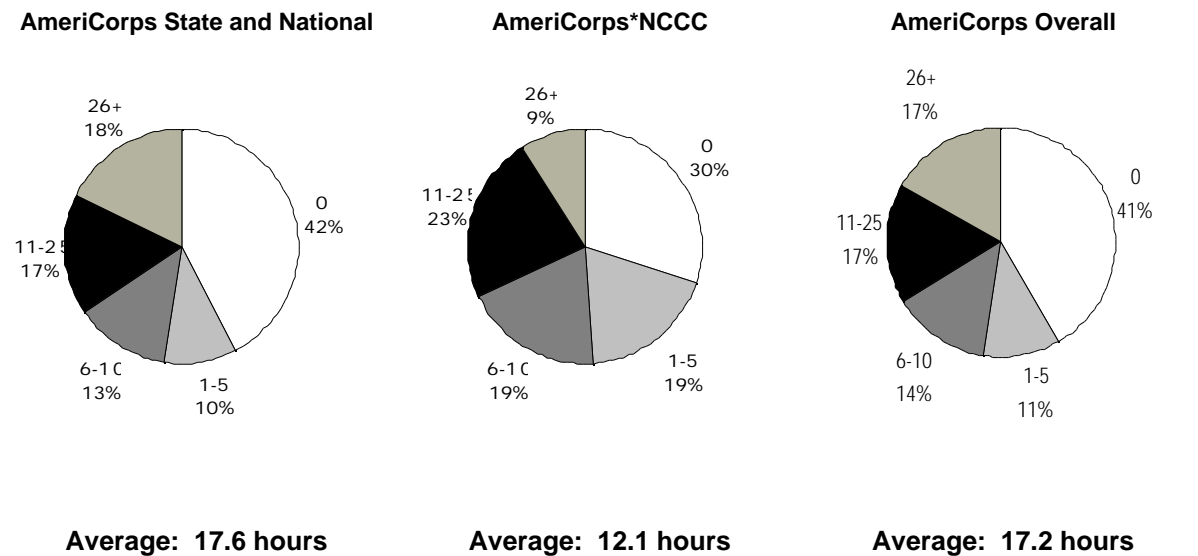


Exhibit 11**Members' Exposure to Key Service-Related Events When Younger^a**

Event	Percent Responding "Yes"	
	AmeriCorps Members	National Population
You saw someone in your family help others	85.6	78.4
You personally saw someone you admire (not a family member) helping others	80.4	67.8
You were active in a church group, religious organization, or community group	68.0	62.9/53.7 ^b
You were active in student government	30.3	22.3

a Multiple answers were permitted.

b Our survey combined two events that were asked about separately on the Independent Sector study. On that study, 62.9 percent reported being active in a youth group or something similar; 53.7 were active in a religious organization. *Giving and Volunteering in the U.S.: Findings from a National Study, 1996.*

Characteristics of Prior Service Experiences. We also asked members who had volunteered in the prior year about the nature of their prior service experience. The most common type of service was education-related and involved tutoring, mentoring, or taking care of children, teenagers, or adults; almost three-quarters of the respondents reported education-related prior service. The next most common service type AmeriCorps members were involved with was taking care of seniors who were ill or of homeless individuals—more than two out of five members reported contributing this type of service. Exhibit 12 displays the types of member service activities they were involved in during the year before they joined AmeriCorps.

Exhibit 12**For Members Volunteering in the Past 12 Months, Type of Service^a**

	Percent
Tutor, mentor, or take care of children, teenagers, or adults	72.6
Help to take care of sick, elderly, or homeless people	42.0
Organize or do administrative work for programs helping needy individuals	28.5
Clean trails or do other environment work	23.9
Help renovate, construct, or clean offices or buildings for needy people	16.7

a Multiple answers were permitted.

Of those who served in the prior year, most served all or at least part of the time in the community where they lived. Members who served outside of their home communities served more hours, although the difference is not statistically significant. Less than a quarter (23 percent) of the service activities were done to meet school or college requirements. Members have positive perceptions of their experience, as indicated

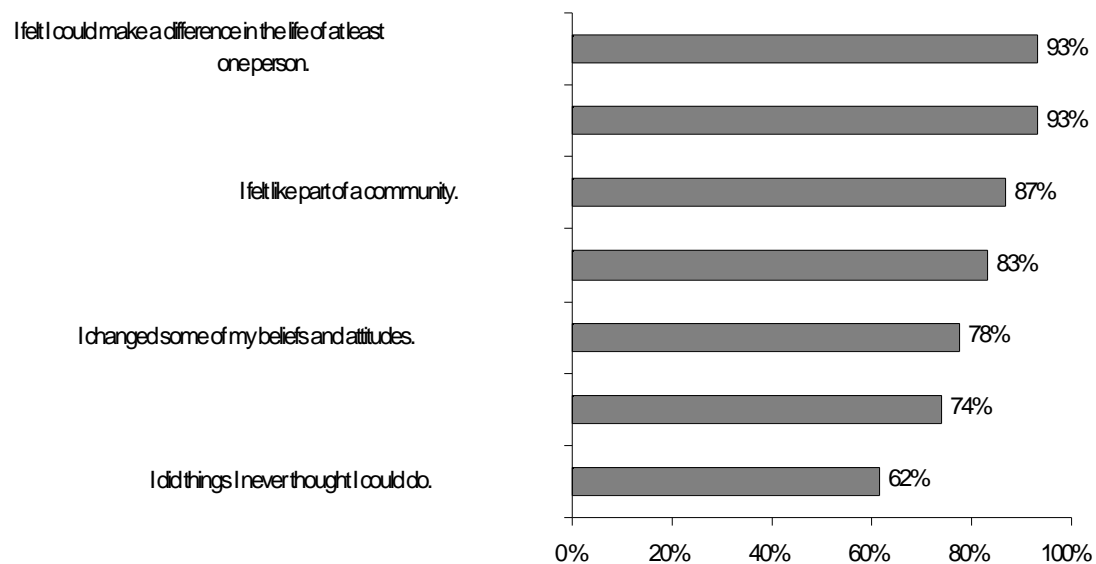
Did prior service take place in "home" community?

		Average Service Hours/Month
Yes, for all services	56%	29
Yes, for some services	27%	28
No	16%	35

by their rating of eight aspects of the prior experience. As displayed in Exhibit 13, at least 60 percent of the respondents indicated their service experience was worthwhile on each aspect. Over 90 percent said they agreed or strongly agreed that in their prior service experience, they made a difference in the life of at least one person and that they made a contribution to the community.

Exhibit 13

Perceived Worth of Service Experience During the Year Prior to Enrollment in AmeriCorps (percent who agreed or strongly agreed)



The Corporation encourages the use of “reflection”—thinking, writing, and talking about a service experience—for the purpose of better understanding the effect of service on both service provider and recipient. As indicated in Exhibit 14, of members who engaged in service during the prior year, almost one-quarter kept a journal or wrote about their experience, while over 90 percent talked about their service with others.

Exhibit 14

For Those Volunteering in the Past 12 Months, Participation in Reflection

Activity	Percent Responding “Yes”
Did you keep a journal or write about what your service or volunteer experience meant to you?	22.8
Did you talk about your service or volunteer experience with other volunteers, friends, or relatives?	90.6

Voting Behavior. An important indicator of civic involvement is voting behavior. The most recent national election held prior to the baseline survey was the 1998 Congressional election, a year in which voter turnout was especially low. During that election, AmeriCorps members were slightly more likely to be registered to vote but much more likely to have actually voted, compared with the nation as a whole. More than half of AmeriCorps members reported they voted, compared to about one in three eligible individuals nationwide.

Exhibit 15

1998 Voter Registration and Turnout

	AmeriCorps Members	National Population ^a
Percent registered to vote ^b	73.3	70.6
Percent who reported they voted	53.8	36.4

a Sources: State Election Offices and the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

b Based on those who were eligible to register and voted (n=1,900).

Attitudes Related to Civic Responsibility. We asked members about their perceptions of whether certain activities were obligations that a citizen owes to the country. Almost all members rated each activity as a “very important” obligation, as indicated in Exhibit 16. However, members tended to give higher ratings to the activities that related to solving immediate and personally relevant needs, such as keeping their neighborhood safe and reporting a crime, than to more traditional civic responsibilities such as voting and serving on a jury.

Exhibit 16

Ratings of Activities as an Obligation that a Citizen Owes to the Country

Activity	Percent Reporting “Very Important” ^a
Helping to keep the neighborhood safe	85.9
Reporting a crime that you may have witnessed	84.3
Helping those who are less fortunate	84.3
Helping to keep the neighborhood clean and beautiful	77.0
Voting in elections	71.6
Participating in neighborhood organizations	67.7
Keeping informed about news and public issues	65.7
Serving on a jury if called	47.9

a On a scale of 1-3, where 1 = not an important obligation to 3 = very important obligation.

Members also gave high ratings on items intended to gauge the extent of their connection to the community, as indicated in Exhibit 17. In particular, over 90 percent of the members reported they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I feel I have the ability to make a difference in my community.” (Response on this item also may reflect the high rates of civic efficacy discussed later in this report.)

Exhibit 17

Ratings of Connection to Community

Statement	Percent Who Agree or Strongly Agree^a
I feel I have the ability to make a difference in my community.	90.4
I try to find the time or a way to make a positive difference in my community.	74.5
I am aware of what can be done to meet the important needs in my community.	70.4
I often discuss and think about how larger political and social issues affect my community.	70.0
I have a strong attachment to my community.	58.8

a On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

Members also reported knowing a good deal about problems facing their communities; they know most about crime and least about a lack of civic involvement, as indicated in Exhibit 18.

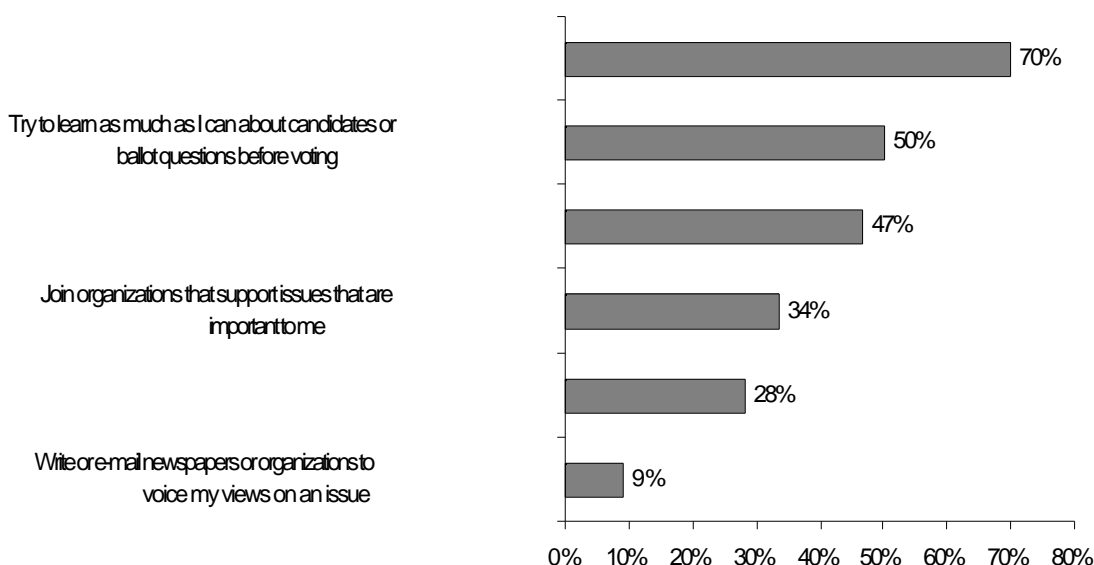
Exhibit 18

Knowledge of Problems Facing the Community

Problem	Percent Reporting “4” or “5”^a
Crime	63.2
The environment	57.3
Literacy	51.6
Public health issues	51.5
Lack of civic involvement	41.8

a On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = know nothing and 5 = know a great deal

We also asked members about how often they engaged in activities related to public or current affairs. As seen in the responses summarized in Exhibit 19, members are more likely to have participated passively rather than actively. For example, while 70 percent of respondents indicated they keep informed about local or national news, less than 10 percent said they write or e-mail newspapers or organizations to voice their views on an issue.

Exhibit 19**Engagement in Public or Civic Affairs (Percent Reporting “Very Often” Or “Always”)**

Life Skills

Previous studies have indicated that life skills—competencies needed to function effectively within work and social arenas—are increased through participation in service.¹⁸ This study examines three broad areas of life skills that may be affected by participation in AmeriCorps.

Tolerance for Diversity. Since its inception, the Corporation has emphasized the importance of promoting tolerance by encouraging AmeriCorps programs to recruit and retain members from a wide range of age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational levels, work experience, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In their applications for AmeriCorps funding, programs are required to demonstrate the measures they will take to ensure member diversity. At baseline, this study examined tolerance for diversity on two dimensions: members’ knowledge about individuals from different backgrounds, and their attitudes toward diversity.¹⁹ In this section we provide descriptive information on members’ tolerance for diversity overall. Future analysis will explore differences in these measures across subgroups.

¹⁸ Intili, JoAnn, Edward Kissam, and Heide Wrigley. *AmeriCorps Impact on Members’ Life Skills*. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International. September 1998.

¹⁹ The baseline survey deliberately included a series of three somewhat overlapping scales related to attitudes toward diversity. This comparatively high emphasis on diversity reflects both the Corporation’s commitment to fostering tolerance and the difficulty of accurately measuring this characteristic.

We asked members how much they knew about the concerns and issues facing individuals from different groups, as defined by race and ethnicity and other demographic characteristics. Members reported knowing the most about low-income individuals and the least about Asian Americans. Not surprisingly, members report knowing most about individuals from their own racial/ethnic group. The percent reporting 4 or 5 (on a five-point scale where 1 = nothing and 5 = a great deal) is presented in Exhibit 20.

At baseline, members reported quite positive attitudes related to tolerance for differences and appreciation for diversity, as indicated by their responses to two items included in the survey. They reported frequent socialization with individuals from another racial or ethnic group in the year prior to AmeriCorps enrollment, as shown in Exhibit 21. Moreover, well over half of the members indicated they were “very interested” in being friends or working with individuals from diverse backgrounds, as indicated in Exhibit 22; less than 2 percent indicated they had little or no interest. Slightly fewer than half said they were very comfortable in talking about social issues with others from different backgrounds.

Exhibit 20

Knowledge of Diverse Groups

Category	Percent Reporting “4” or “5”
People with low incomes	71.5
Whites, non-Latinos	56.8
Urban young people	56.5
Older persons/seniors	55.0
African Americans	51.7
Rural young people	50.1
People with disabilities	42.1
Hispanics or Latinos	40.5
Asian Americans	19.2

Exhibit 21

Socialization with Individuals from Another Race/Ethnic Group in Year Prior to AmeriCorps Enrollment

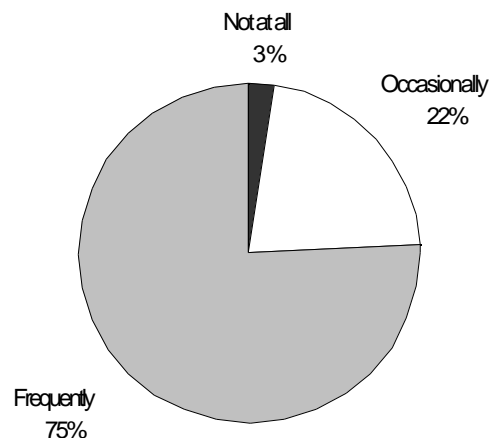


Exhibit 22

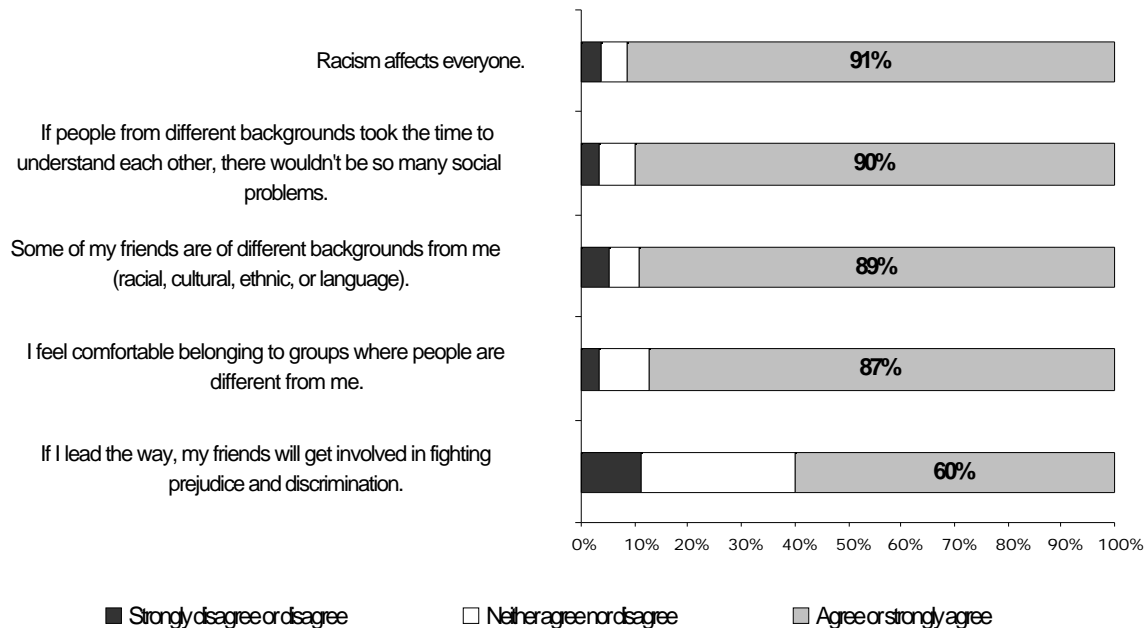
Attitudes toward Interaction with People from Different Backgrounds

	Percent "Very Interested"
How interested are you in forming friendships with people who come from a different race or ethnicity from you?	56.9
How interested are you in looking for opportunities to work with people from different backgrounds?	56.7
	Percent "Very Comfortable"
How comfortable are you in talking about social barriers, race, and/or diversity with others from different backgrounds than you?	48.3

We also asked members another series of questions related to attitudes toward diversity. Overall, respondents scored high on this measure. As indicated in Exhibit 23, over 90 percent indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Racism affects everyone." Members scored lowest on the item "If I lead the way, my friends will get involved in fighting prejudice and discrimination." This may be a measure of perceived leadership skills or perception about their friends' apathy rather than of tolerance. This item received the lowest ratings on the scale by both whites and persons of color.

Exhibit 23

Attitudes Toward Diversity



Teamwork. The ability to work effectively in teams has been increasingly recognized as an important skill necessary both in the workplace and socially.²⁰ Most AmeriCorps programs promote this skill by organizing members in teams for at least part of the time. We asked members whether their prior experience working in groups had demonstrated features considered consistent with effective teams. As indicated in Exhibit 24, members consistently reported a good deal of such experience—on all four items, over 70 percent reported they had experienced the feature “very often” or “always” in prior group experiences; only 1 percent or less reported they had “never” been in a group situation where the feature occurred.

We asked members about their own behavior in previous group situations. Members reported how often they demonstrated behavior generally indicative of effective teamwork skills. As indicated in Exhibit 25, on average members reported they consistently demonstrated those behaviors “very often” or “always” when in group situations.

Exhibit 24

Frequency of Experiencing Selected Features in Previous Group Situations

Feature	Percent Reporting “Very Often” or “Always”
Members of the group can disagree and be different from one another without fear.	74.1
Members of the group discuss issues and problems and share ideas.	77.1
Members of the group involve everyone and avoid favoritism.	73.4
Members of the group can take time to work out any conflict.	71.1
a On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = never and 5 = always.	

Exhibit 25

Incidence of Reported Behavior in Group Situations

Behavior	Percent Reporting “Very Often” or “Always”
I encourage the participation of other team members and support their right to be heard.	88.3
I try to present my ideas without criticizing the ideas of others.	83.6
I help find solutions when unexpected problems arise.	81.0
I try to consider all points of view or possible options before forming an opinion or making a decision.	80.1
I try to understand other team members' ideas and opinions before arguing or stating my own.	79.1
I encourage different points of view without worrying about agreement.	66.5
a Mean on scale from 1 to 5 where 1 = never and 5 = always.	

²⁰ See the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C., 1992.

Self-Efficacy. We asked respondents about their perceived self-efficacy—belief in their ability to accomplish activities—in three areas: civic involvement, education, and employment attainment. Members scored relatively high on self-efficacy across all three contexts. In assessing member self-efficacy within the civic engagement context, we used items that were intended to measure the extent to which members’ perceptions of their capacity to lead service activities changed over time. AmeriCorps has the goal of not only increasing members’ participation in service, but also promoting their service leadership skills. On the self-efficacy/leadership measure for civic engagement, members were asked if they could accomplish an activity, having first assumed they found the activity worthwhile. As indicated in Exhibit 26, in general members said they felt they were more able to accomplish activities over which they had greater personal influence. For instance, they were more confident about organizing a benefit event or starting an after-school program than persuading governmental agencies to make major capital investments or going through the political process to include a ballot issue in an election.

Exhibit 26

Civic Efficacy

	Percent Saying They Might or Would be Able to Accomplish:
Starting an after-school program for children whose parents work	96.3
Organizing an event to benefit a charity or religious organization	94.3
Getting the local government to fix a pothole in my street	90.3
Getting the local government to build an addition to the community center	77.6
Getting an issue on the ballot for a statewide election	76.4

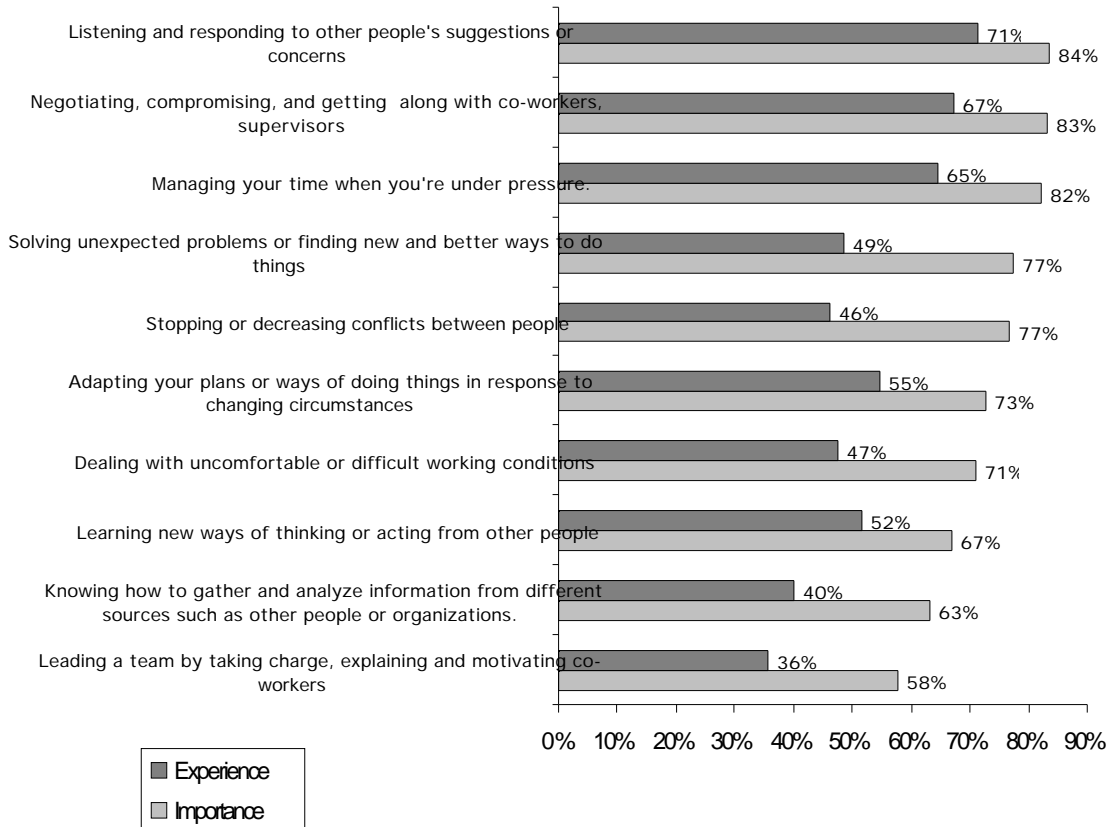
We also assessed perception of self-efficacy by asking members a series of questions to gauge the extent to which they perceive they can influence their experiences in work and educational contexts. Most members reported comparatively high levels of self-efficacy in both employment and education areas. Average scores are presented in Exhibit 27.

Exhibit 27**Perceived Self-Efficacy In Employment and Educational Settings**

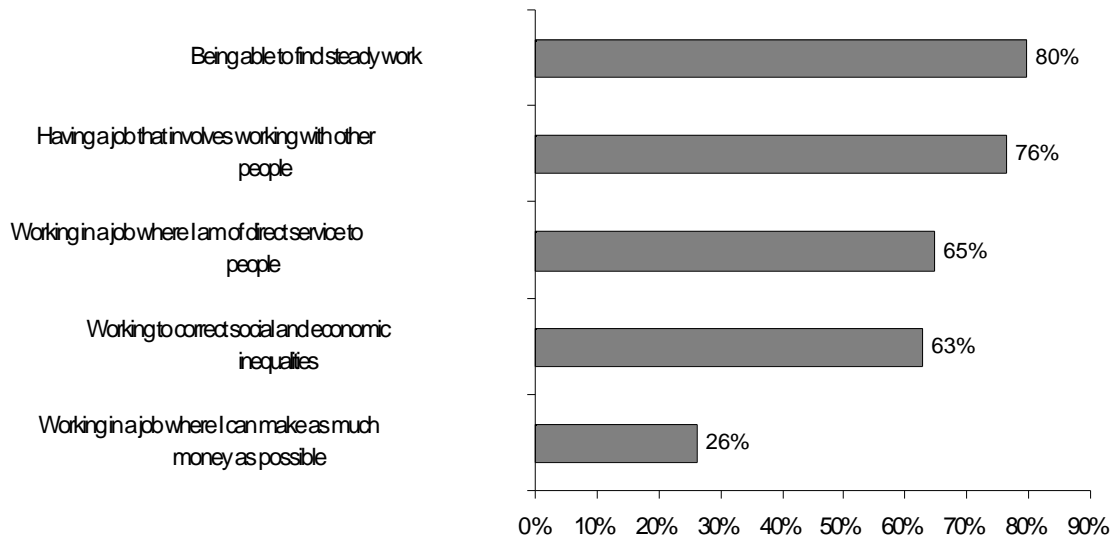
	Percent Who Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Percent Who Neither Agree nor Disagree	Percent Who Agree or Strongly Agree
Education			
*I have the intelligence I need to finish my education.	1.2	5.4	93.3
When I have trouble with schoolwork, it's because teachers or other education staff don't like me.	91.5	6.9	1.7
*I can work really hard when it comes to getting the education I need.	2.7	8.5	88.9
To get the education I need, I have to be lucky.	85.0	10.2	4.9
I can't figure out what it takes to finish my education.	84.4	9.7	5.9
I have mostly bad luck when it comes to education.	74.9	17.4	7.7
If I don't finish my education, it is because I didn't have the chances others have.	77.6	14.4	8.0
Employment			
If I can't get a good job, it's because people aren't fair to people like me.	86.2	9.6	4.2
I can't seem to try very hard to get a good job.	79.6	13.4	7.0
I can't get people to treat me fairly when I apply for the kind of job I want.	78.8	14.9	7.0
I don't know what it takes to get the kind of job I want.	77.7	13.3	9.0
There aren't enough jobs for me to get the kind of job I want.	67.3	20.8	11.9
a Mean on a five-point scale where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.			
* Asterisks indicate items for which "strongly agree" is the most desirable response.			

Attitudes Related to Employment and Education

As noted earlier, the opportunity to explore future job/education interests was the second most common reason given for joining AmeriCorps. Almost all members (98 percent) had worked full- or part-time at some point before joining AmeriCorps. In order to later assess the effect of AmeriCorps on members' work or career related skills and interests, a set of questions focused on members' attitudes about work and their future plans. We asked members about both their experience with and the perceived importance to them of various skills related to one's ability to function effectively on the job. Many AmeriCorps programs attempt to encourage the development of these skills through service activities. As shown in Exhibit 28, most members view the skills as important—at least half of the members indicate that each of the skills has “a lot” of importance to them. While members view the skills as important, they report less actual experience in those areas. For all skills, perceived importance outranks experience by at least 10 percent.

Exhibit 28**Experience and Perceived Importance of Employment-Related Skills: Percent Reporting Skill Area Has “A Lot” of Importance to Them, and Percent Reporting “A Lot” of Experience in that Area**

Members also were asked about the perceived importance of selected job attributes. As indicated in Exhibit 29, members tend to be more altruistic than self-interested when thinking about the kind of work they would like to do. Almost two-thirds of members say it was “very important” for them to work in a job where they would be of direct service to people (65 percent) or working to correct social and economic inequities (63 percent), compared with one-quarter (26 percent) who say it is “very important” to work in a job where they can make as much money as possible. At the same time, being able to find steady work is important to 80 percent of members.

Exhibit 29**Employment-Related Characteristics: Percent Who Feel This Is Very Important to Them**

Future Aspirations. Members were asked about what they would like to be doing two years after their enrollment in AmeriCorps. Ninety percent said they would like to be enrolled in post-secondary education (either full- or part-time), consistent with the high educational aspirations reported earlier. Well over half (59 percent) hope to be working full-time; another 16 percent part-time. Twenty-eight percent said they hoped to be participating in national service or volunteer work, evenly split between full- and part-time service.

Percent who would like to be enrolled in school two years later, by type of educational institution:

Graduate or professional school	31
Four-year college	29
Community college	22
Technical school/apprenticeship	8

Multiple answers were allowed to this question.

No single field of future work or study was preferred by a majority of members. Teaching, social/community work, and health-related are the most common fields members say they hope to be engaged in two years after their enrollment in AmeriCorps. All other fields were mentioned by fewer than 10 percent of the respondents.

Fields in which members hope to work two years later:

Teaching children/adults	28%
Social/community work	26%
Health-related	15%

Multiple answers were allowed to this question.

In the next section, we describe similarities and differences between members in the treatment and comparison groups at baseline. At the end of that section, we also summarize our conclusions and provide an overview of future analyses in this study.

4. Comparability of AmeriCorps Treatment and Comparison Group Members

A set of analyses was performed to compare treatment and comparison group members on a wide range of baseline characteristics within State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC programs respectively.²¹ These analyses were performed to address the following research questions:

Are AmeriCorps (State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC) and comparison group members similar in terms of:

- prior participation in voluntary community service at baseline?
- their attitudes towards civic engagement at baseline?
- their attitudes towards diversity and teamwork at baseline?
- their attitudes towards the value of education and employment at baseline?
- key demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, race, and educational background at baseline?
- For AmeriCorps*NCCC only: their application scores used to rate their entry into AmeriCorps*NCCC?

We conducted a series of statistical analyses to assess the baseline comparability between the AmeriCorps and comparison groups within both State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC. This set of comparisons of AmeriCorps member/comparison group differences ultimately will help us learn which baseline variables need to be controlled for in our subsequent impact analyses. Using these covariates will allow us to increase the precision of our analytic model, as well as help adjust for any bias associated with initial differences between the two groups.²²

Comparability of State and National Member and Comparison Group Data

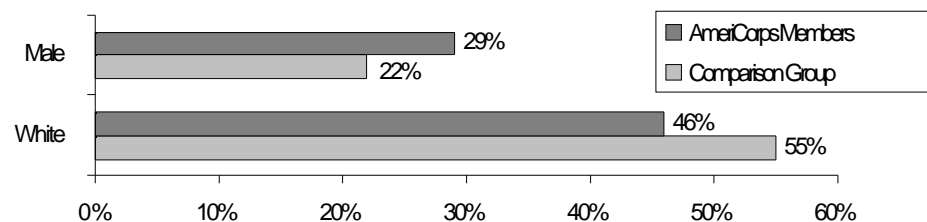
Key Finding. The national comparison group for AmeriCorps*State and National was drawn from the set of individuals who called the AmeriCorps toll-free number to inquire about the program. This strategy was used to identify individuals who both knew about AmeriCorps and indicated some propensity to serve. At baseline, AmeriCorps*State and National and

²¹ Appendix F lists the set of composite measures that were used to make comparisons between the two groups.

²² Differences described here are only reported for values of $p < .002$. See Appendix G for a discussion of statistical and practical significance.

comparison group members are very similar in terms of their age and some of the outcome measures. However, the results show a number of important differences between the State and National treatment and comparison group members at baseline, in terms of both demographics and baseline outcome measures.

Demographics. As shown in Exhibit 30, State and National members are more likely to be men (29 vs. 22 percent) and less likely to be white (46 vs. 55 percent) than members of the comparison group. In contrast, the two groups were statistically comparable in terms of age. The average age for both groups is slightly under 28 years.

Exhibit 30**Gender and Racial Differences—State and National vs. Comparison Group**

Civic Engagement. Of eight scales measuring various facets of civic engagement, the comparison group members scored higher on four (responsibility, involvement/participation, involvement/civic efficacy, and involvement/prior participation). However, on the whole, the differences are rather small in magnitude (see Appendix H, Exhibit H.1). The statistical significance of the findings can be attributed to two likely factors: little variation in respondent scores, and very large sample sizes in both groups.

Comparison group members were more likely to have ever participated in voluntary community service (89 vs. 81 percent) than State and National members (Exhibit 31). On the other hand, State and National members participated more hours per month (17.6 vs. 11.3 hours). These figures included those respondents who did not participate in the past 12 months, indicating that the State and National members, when they did participate, tended to spend more time in service activities.

Comparison group members were both more likely to have voted in 1998 (66 vs. 55 percent) and been registered to vote (80 vs. 73 percent) than State and National members (see Exhibit 32). One possible reason for the difference is that the higher voting rate of the comparison group may be associated with the higher education level of its members. National surveys of voting behavior indicate that education is strongly correlated with voting.

Figure 31

Previous Participation in Voluntary Service

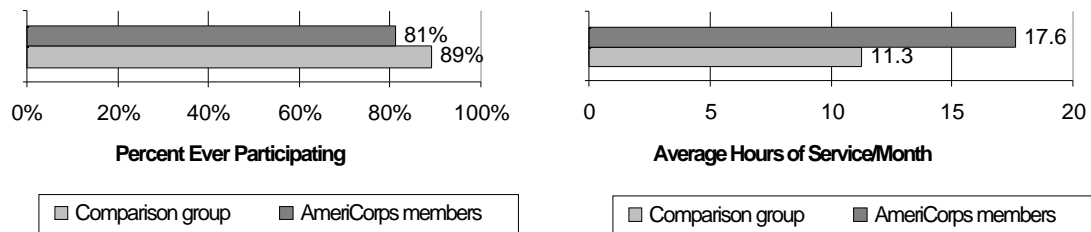
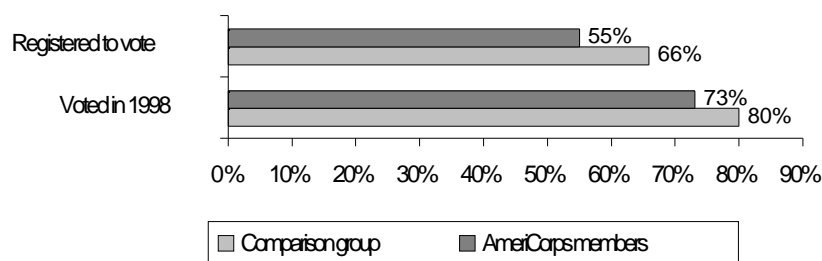


Exhibit 32

Voting Behavior—State and National vs. Comparison Group



Education/Employment. There were no important differences on educational or employment outcomes between State and National and comparison group members at baseline (see Appendix H, Exhibit H.1).

Life Skills. Comparison group members had higher scores on the three scales measuring attitudes toward and knowledge of diversity than members in State and National. Both groups were comparable in terms of their attitudes toward teamwork (see Appendix H, Exhibit H.1).

Summary. The above results show a number of important differences between the State and National treatment and comparison group members at baseline, in terms of both demographics and baseline outcome measures. One possible reason for the differences between the two groups is the method of recruitment used by State and National programs. In many instances, AmeriCorps programs meet their recruitment goals through a local application process targeting community residents. In contrast, the comparison group comprises only individuals seeking information about State and National through the national toll-free information number. These individuals are not necessarily representative of AmeriCorps members recruited locally by State and National programs.

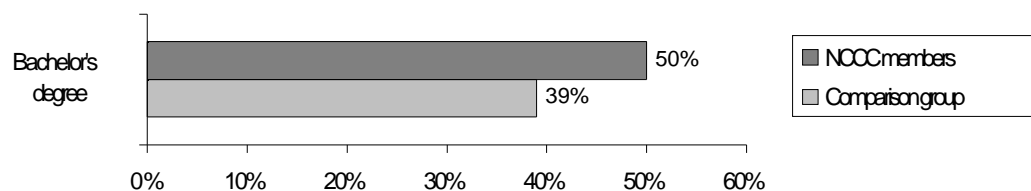
Comparability of AmeriCorps*NCCC Member and Comparison Group Data

Key Finding. The AmeriCorps*NCCC treatment and comparison group members were drawn from the same pool of individuals who applied to the program. These individuals completed both an extensive written application and a telephone interview to assess their qualifications for admission into the program. Not surprisingly, the two groups are highly comparable on a wide variety of outcome measures and demographic characteristics.

Demographics. The AmeriCorps*NCCC and comparison groups were fairly similar in terms of gender, race, and age (see Exhibit 33). AmeriCorps*NCCC members were more likely (50 vs. 39 percent) to hold a bachelor's degree than members of the comparison group. In addition, as expected, AmeriCorps*NCCC members received higher scores on the ratings of their application (87 vs. 82 points out of a possible 100).

Exhibit 33

Educational Attainment—AmeriCorps*NCCC vs. Comparison Group



Civic Engagement. Of the eight scales measuring various facets of civic engagement, the comparison group members scored higher on four (responsibility, involvement/participation, involvement/civic efficacy, and involvement/prior participation). Although the comparison group also scored higher on other scales (identification, service/perception, and involvement/attitudes), these differences were not statistically significant (see Appendix H, Exhibit H.2).

There were no significant differences between the groups in terms of prior participation in voluntary community service. Treatment and comparison group members were also similar in terms of voting behavior.

Education/Employment. There were no important differences between the two groups on measures of education and employment efficacy and skills.

Life Skills. The AmeriCorps*NCCC treatment and comparison groups differed only on the dimension of diversity knowledge, with comparison group members having higher scores (see Appendix H, Exhibit H.2).

Summary. The AmeriCorps*NCCC treatment and comparison group members were highly comparable, owing to the fact that all individuals in the study sample were drawn from the same applicant pool. Although treatment group members are more highly educated than comparison group members, members of the comparison group scored higher, on average, on baseline outcome measures than did treatment group members.

Conclusions and Future Analyses

In this report, we presented findings from the analysis of baseline data from “Serving Country and Community: A Study of Service in AmeriCorps.” These data were collected on members upon their enrollment in AmeriCorps and on individuals in comparison groups during the same timeframe. We provided detailed information on member characteristics including their propensity to serve, demographics, attitudes related to civic engagement, life skills, and employment and educational attainment.

As indicated by the baseline data, AmeriCorps members are more ethnically diverse, compared to the national population, and also are younger and more likely to be female. Members demonstrated a strong commitment to service before they enrolled in AmeriCorps and also scored high on measures of civic engagement, acceptance of diversity, and life skills.

In this report, we also assessed the comparability of individuals in the two member and comparison groups (State and National program and AmeriCorps*NCCC). Although, in general, the treatment and comparison groups are similar, there are a number of important differences between the State and National groups in terms of both demographics and baseline outcome characteristics. In contrast, the AmeriCorps*NCCC treatment and comparison groups are highly comparable.

In the next phase of the study—the post-program analysis—we will examine changes in AmeriCorps members (compared with their counterparts in the comparison groups) one year after baseline, when most members will have completed their program experience. In the upcoming Analysis Plan for the post-program report, we will discuss our plans for controlling for baseline differences between the member and treatment groups in the post-program analysis. In addition to reporting on member outcomes, the post-program report will include an analysis of selected programmatic features and their relationship to changes in member outcomes.

The final phase of the study will be based on data collected on members and individuals in the comparison groups approximately three years after baseline.